Small Steps, Big Leaps: Building Readiness and Managing Big Feelings

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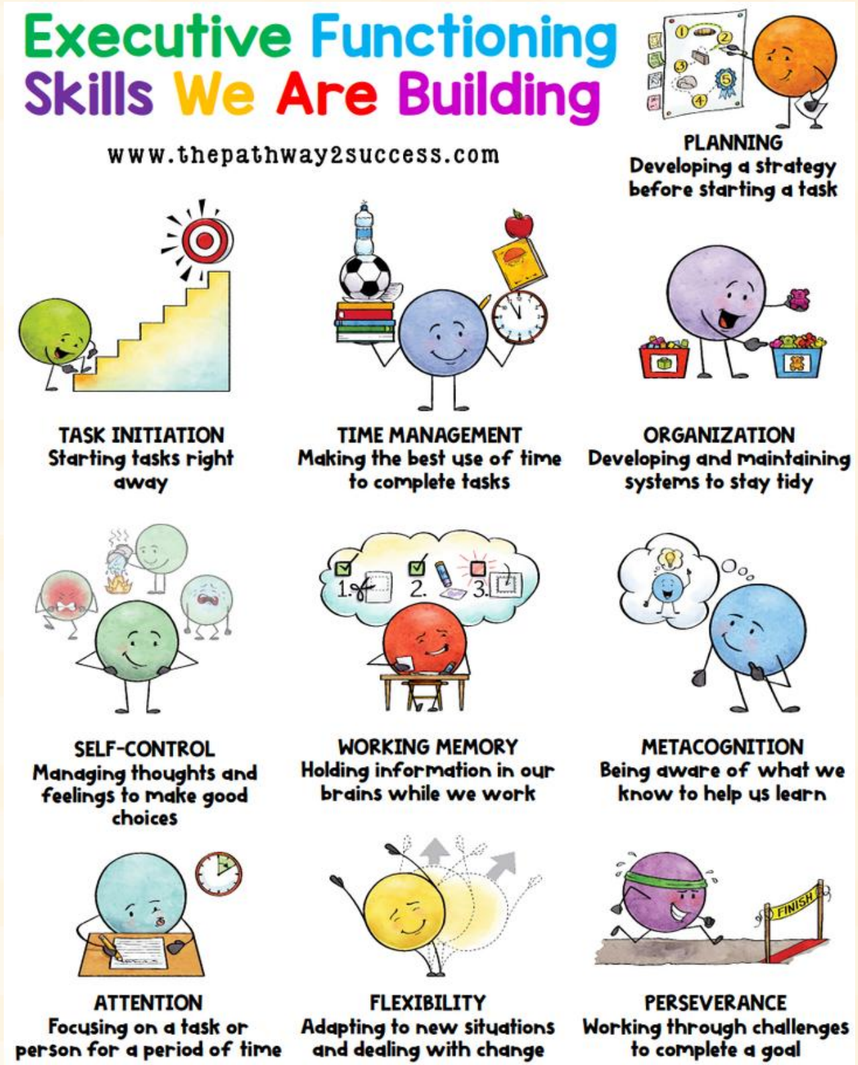
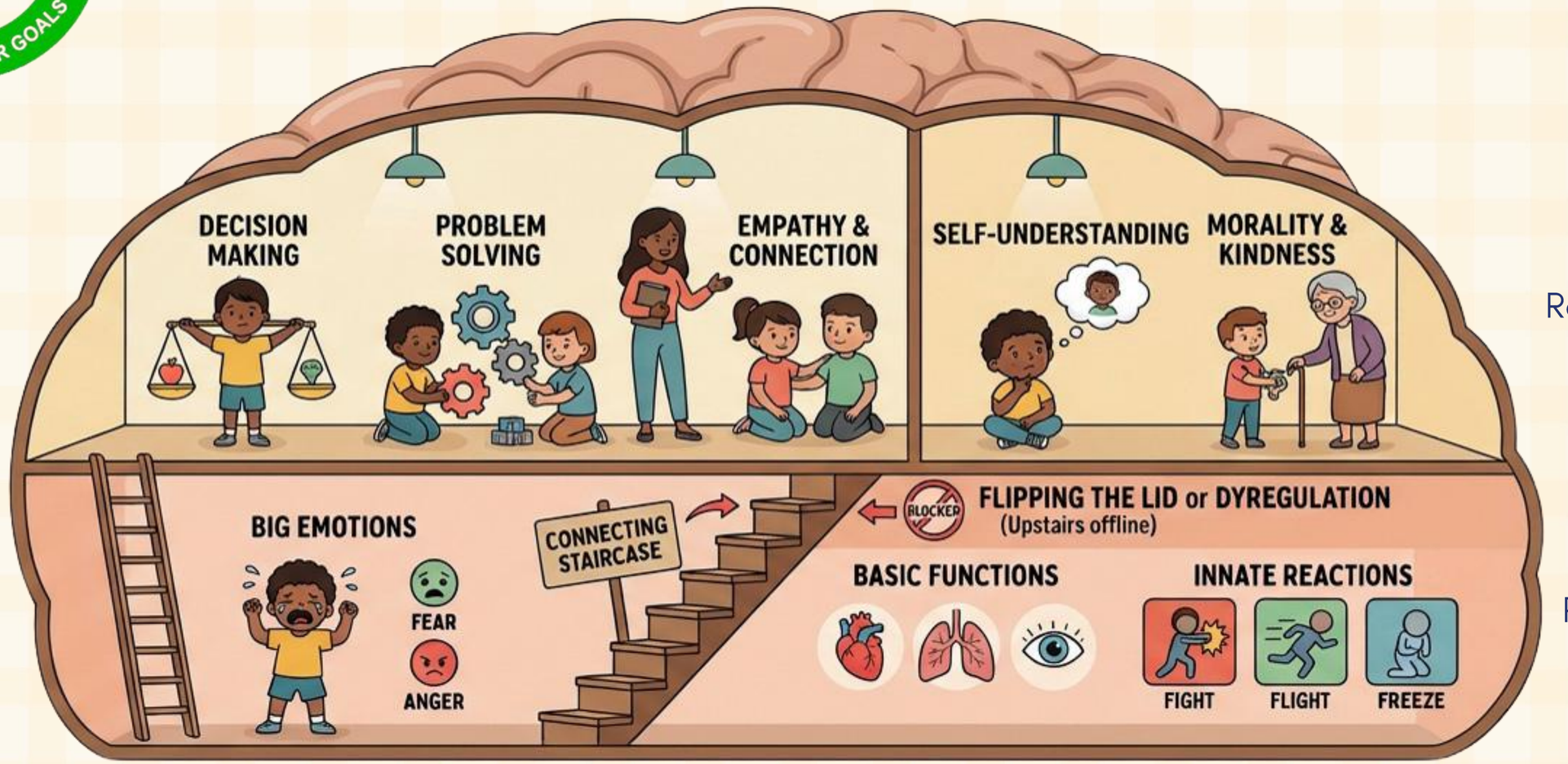
WHAT ARE EF SKILLS?

Executive functions are **a set of cognitive processes** that act as the brain's traffic control system, **helping us to attend to events in our environment, plan and initiate actions, control our emotions, and manage our daily life, our time and our relationships.**



SCIENCE BEHIND EMOTIONAL REGULATION



Upstairs Brain
Receptive & Thinking
(Fully mature mid 20s)

Downstairs Brain
Reactive & Survival
(Developed at birth)

Reference: Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson in The Whole-Brain Child

WHAT IS ZONES OF REGULATION (ZOR)?

A simple, child-friendly, and research-based framework to guide children in developing:

Self-Awareness

"How does my body feel?"
"What is my energy level right now?"
“Which Zone am I in?”

Social Awareness

Understanding how their feelings and actions affect the people around them.

Self-Management Skills

Developing healthy and appropriate ways to regulate "uncomfortable" feelings (e.g., frustration and anxiety) or high-energy states (e.g., overjoyed).

Common Language

Establishing a shared vocabulary between school and home using the four colour Zones.

Ultimate Goal:

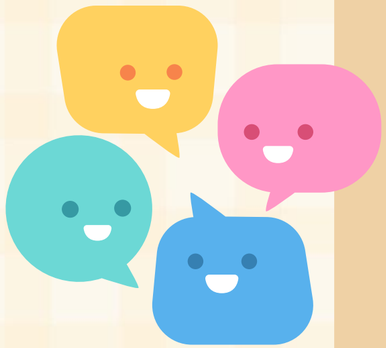
To support children in becoming independent, confident, and resilient learners.

HOW PARENTS CAN USE ZOR AT HOME



Family Check-In

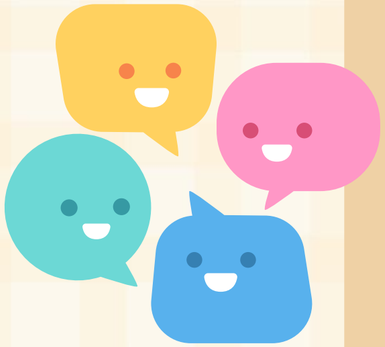
- Spend some time every day to chat about their day.
- "I felt stressed and in the Yellow Zone today **because** I had so much work to do, but seeing you made me forget about my stress ☺. How about you? How was your day?"
- Encourage child to share both challenges and happy moments.
- Listen, empathise and celebrate efforts before offering guidance.



Model the Language

- Express your feelings using the ZOR language in an I-statement.
- "I'm starting to feel in the Yellow Zone because of the traffic jam. I'm going to take three deep breaths to stay calm. Let's do them together."

HOW PARENTS CAN USE ZOR AT HOME



Notice their body signals and talk about them without judgment.

- “I notice that you are biting your fingernails. Are you worried about something?”
- If the behaviour is undesirable to you, revisit the behaviour another time and suggest a replacement behaviour.



Build a calming toolkit together

- Work with your child to find out what helps them move between zones.
- Different tools work for different children.
- Designate a safe space in the house.

PARENTS' KIT: DIY BREATHING WAND

Purpose:

- Manage uncomfortable feelings
- Focus attention
- Turn abstract breathing into a physical/visual activity for easier calming

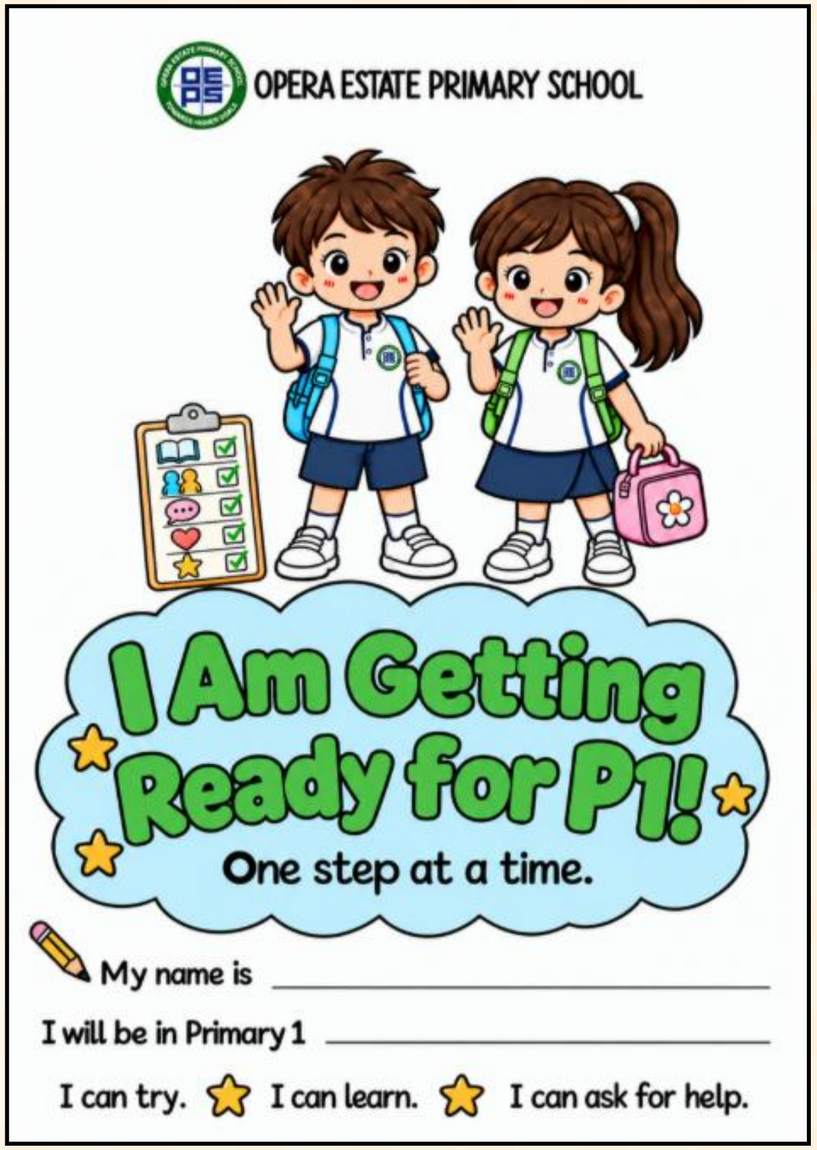




PARENTS' KIT: ZOR MAGNET



PARENTS' KIT: GETTING READY FOR P1 BOOKLET





PARENTS' KIT: GETTING READY FOR P1 BOOKLET



Activity 1

I Can Pack My Bag

I can get my things ready.

1 Check

Look at my timetable to see what I need.

My Timetable

Day	7.30–8.00	8.00–8.30	8.30–9.00
Mon	English	Math	PE
Tue	English	Art	Music
Wed	Math	English	PAL

2 Find

Find the things I need.

Student Handbook

3 Pack

Put my things neatly in my bag.

Books and student handbook

Snack box

Pencil case

TRY IT TOGETHER AT HOME

Pack for an outing

Plan a short outing together. Help your child make a simple packing list, find the items and pack their bag.

My packing list

- Water bottle
- Snack box
- Cap

Pack a snack together

Let your child choose a healthy snack, put it in a snack box and pack it with their water bottle.

Apple slices | Banana | Plain biscuits

3



Activity 4

I Can Ask for Help

I can tell someone what I need.

It is okay to ask for help.

WHEN I NEED HELP

What happens	What I can say
I do not understand.	I don't understand. Please help me.
I feel unwell.	I am not feeling well.
I need the toilet.	May I go to the toilet, please?
I need a pencil.	May I borrow a pencil, please?
I cannot open my bag.	Please help me open my bag.

TRY IT TOGETHER AT HOME

Practice asking for help in everyday situations.

1 Practise the words

Please help me.

Take turns asking for help and responding.

2 Start with someone familiar

Let your child practise with you or another trusted adult.

3 Praise their effort

Praise your child for trying, even if they need a reminder.

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THANK YOU



